IV

LETTER TO JOSEPH

Maimonides wrote this letter to his favorite disciple, Joseph ben Judah, to whom the *Guide of the Perplexed* was dedicated. While in Baghdad Joseph had become embroiled in a bitter controversy with Samuel ben Ali, the Gaon of Baghdad, and with Samuel's son-in-law, Zechariah, who held a high office (*Av Bet Din*) at Samuel's court of law. Joseph had aroused Samuel's enmity by being instrumental in thwarting the latter's attempt to control the office of the Exilarch. Since Joseph wished to open a school in Baghdad and to teach Maimonides' Code there, the worth of the Code was another point of contention between Joseph and Samuel.

In the background of the letter lies the struggle between the "religious" leader, Samuel ben Ali, and the "secular" leader, the Exilarch. The question at stake is roughly comparable to the issue of Church versus State in the Christian world. Maimonides supported the independence of the Exilarchate against Samuel's plans to make the Exilarch his own puppet. Samuel's authority extended primarily over the Jewish legal system in Babylonia, while the Exilarch, besides his power to appoint judges in certain kinds of cases, could compel the acceptance of legal decisions among Jews anywhere in the world. Maimonides conceived of the Exilarch as being like the King of the Jews in Exile (*M.T.,* Laws Concerning the Sanhedrin, IV 13–14). His support of the Exilarchate resulted in a continued division of authority between the "secular" and "religious" leadership. The advantage of such a division is suggested by Maimonides' observation in the letter that "when religion is joined to [political] authority, piety disappears (#15)."

The unity of the letter has been questioned by some modern scholars, who claim that parts of it were written at different times and later combined by a scribe. David Baneth, who edited the Arabic text, argues for the unity of the letter. It is here presented as a single whole, without our intending to take sides in this dispute. The numbers in square brackets divide the letter into sections on the basis of Baneth's edition; they are not in the original text. The passages in diamond brackets are based upon a medieval Hebrew translation, which is used to fill lacunae in the Arabic text.

LETTER TO JOSEPH

[1] <By my belief in the Torah of our master Moses, my son[1] should know that I do not doubt anything you mentioned in your letter. I am certain things were truly like that. However, my moral habits are different from those of my son.> I[2] am very indulgent about what is due to me, whereas my son is unable to patiently forbear. In addition to what[3] thought dictates, age and experience have disciplined me.

[2] Know that I did not compose this *compilation*[4] in order to become preeminent among Jews nor to become famous. Thus I greatly regret that the purpose for which I composed it is disputed. God knows I composed it first of all for myself, to free myself from the [kind of] investigation and inquiry it requires, and also for the period of my old age. And [I composed it] for the sake of God, may He be exalted. Indeed, by God, *I have been very zealous for the Lord, God of Israel.*[5] I saw a religious community without a true law code and without correct and precise opinions, and so I did what I did purely for the sake of God. This is one consideration.

[3] A second consideration: While composing it I knew very well that it would fall into the hands of a wicked, envious man, who would debase its good qualities and pretend it is unnecessary or defective; or [it would fall] into the hands of an ignorant, foolish man who, not recognizing the value of what I have accomplished, would think it is of little benefit; or [it would fall] into the hands of a confused, bewildered beginner, for whom some of the passages in it would be too difficult, either because he does not know the principle[6] behind them or because his mind is incapable of grasping the precision with which they have been formulated; or [it would fall] into the hands of a dense, inflexible, devout person, who would attack what it contains about the principles of belief.[7] These people are in the majority. And [I knew] that it would [also] undoubtedly reach *the remnant who are called by the Lord,*[8] just and equitable men with excellent minds, who would recognize the value of what we have accomplished. You are the foremost among them. If no one besides you had come to me during my lifetime, that would have been enough. But in addition, letters have reached me from the *wise men of France* and from others,

with all of their signatures. They marvel at what has been accomplished and request the rest of it. It has already spread to the outer limit of civilization.

I refer only to my own time in all that I have described to you concerning those who do not accept it the way it deserves to be accepted. In the course of time, when envy and the quest for domination pass away, *all the sons of Israel* will be content with it alone and everything else will undoubtedly fall into disuse.[9] That is, except for someone who seeks something to occupy himself with for his whole life, without ever finishing it. Here, then, is another consideration; it shows that nothing happened[10] to me that I did not anticipate.

[4] A third consideration is that this compilation is not comparable, God forbid, to the *Torah,* which is truly the guide for mankind. Nor does it reach the level of the speech of the prophets. Still, only some people have followed it [the *Mishneh Torah*], while others have turned away from it. Ignorance about the value of this compilation is not more serious than all the ignorance that exists about divine things, let alone other things. If a man makes up his mind to become angry and vexed with everyone who is ignorant of some truth or who stubbornly contends against a certainty or single-mindedly follows some whim, he will undoubtedly pass *all of his days in pain and raging with anger.*[11] This ought not to happen.

[5] A fourth consideration: We shall describe some of my moral habits to you, even though you have come into contact with all of them. Know that here in the city with me there is a group of people who have no fame in the city, no standing, and no power. They are so afflicted with haughtiness and envy that they do not study this great compilation. They have not even looked at it yet so that no one might say: "This man is in a position to profit from the discourse of someone else and is therefore inferior to him in knowledge." They are mindful of the opinion of the common people in this matter and are forever *like a blind man groping in the darkness.*[12]

[6] How could my son not know that such moral habits would be found in someone brought up from his childhood to believe that no one like him exists in his generation?[13] Moreover, he has been encouraged [in that belief] by his old age, standing, ancestry, and by the absence of discerning men in

that area. His need of the people is such that he implants in their souls the abominable concoction that all of the people should seek to know about every matter coming from the *judicial academy*[14] or every honorific title it confers—besides those foolish things that naturally occur to them. How could my son imagine that he would reach such a level of recognition of the truth that he would admit[15] his incompetence and *uproot his honor as well as the honor of his father's house?*[16] This would not be done by someone like him or even by someone more perfect than he.

I am certain that to the extent that my name becomes known there, the situation compels him, his followers, and whoever wants to have standing with the people to find fault with my compilation. They pretend that they are too perfect to need to study it. Instead, they criticize it. [They pretend] that if one of them wanted to, he could quickly compose something finer. If what were said required attacking my religious observance[17] and my actions, he would do that.

[7] By God, all of this does not pain me, my son, even if I were to witness it and it were done in my presence. On the contrary, I have spoken in a refined manner, and I have kept silent or replied, depending upon the circumstances, for [their] neglect of the truth is far more serious than this. I do not come to my own defense, because my own dignity and moral character lead me to ignore fools, not to triumph over them with my tongue.[18] *The Holy One, blessed be He, guards the dignity of an eager student.*[19] Because I am his father and teacher, my son is forgiven for not being able to patiently forbear. However, my heart aches over your pain and preoccupation with this. Were you—God willing—to teach, enlighten, and instruct someone who is able to understand, and were you to reveal its[20] good qualities and to acquaint the people with it, that would be more worthy of you and me than engaging in controversy with these two.[21]

[8] As for this *Master Zechariah,*[22] he is a very foolish man. He has studied by himself and toiled over those *investigations and commentaries.*[23] He supposes himself to be unique in his time and to have already reached the highest perfection. <My esteemed son knows, by the living God, that my evaluation of the great wise men of Israel is based on my determining the

rank they deserve according to their own words. It was they who said: "The work of Abayya and Rabba is a small thing."[24] If this is a small thing in my sight>, why should I pay attention to a truly miserable old man, who is ignorant of everything and whom I view *indeed as an infant one day old?* Still, he is forgiven due to his ignorance.

[9] This jibberish which he jabbers concerning the *Commentary on the Mishnah* is all because I corrected some passages in it. *The Creator of everything* knows that I was in error about most of them because I followed the *Gaonim, may their memory be blessed,* such as *our master Nissim* in *The Revelation of Secrets* and *Rav Ḥefetz, may his memory be blessed,* in the Book of the *Commandments,* and others whom I am reluctant to mention.[25] Even if I myself have been mistaken, I do not claim that I reached my final perfection right from the beginning, nor that I have never erred. On the contrary, whenever a defect has become clear to me, I have always removed it from wherever it was found, whether in my compositions or my natural temperament.[26]

[10] A letter from him [Zechariah] expressing great humility and brimming with apology has reached me. I knew that the intent was to get a reply from me so that he could show the answer and boast about it without making known what he had written to me. The purpose of his letter was to glorify the head of the judicial academy as being unique in his generation, and the one whom the men of Baghdad wanted to appoint. When he [Zechariah] heard him [Samuel ben Ali] speak and saw him, he knew that it was not permitted to oppose him.[27] He was extremely verbose about this and said that the great men of the Maghrib[28] incessantly extolled the *judicial academy.* Then he requested that we support him [Samuel ben Ali].

[11] A second letter also came to me, this one from the head of the judicial academy. It described to me, among the rest of his virtues, the greatness of the aforementioned *Master Zechariah,* that his understanding is great and that *he knows four Orders of the Talmud by heart.* There was much more with this end in view. *They reciprocated with one another.*[29] I know the purpose of both these miserable men and that their intent is to receive a reply. Now a man cannot avoid being courteous in letters. One is unable to do away with civility in speaking—how much less so in letters. Thus, they would make this [the letter] public and

glorify themselves through it, without the people knowing what they had written. Because of that, I delayed answering them until now.

[12] The cause that made the first exchange of letters necessary is as follows. It is proper to demand a detailed account of the actions and words of someone like myself. They denounced me for recommending someone whose qualifications I know nothing about, someone who is a good-for-nothing. He [Samuel ben Ali] mentioned that every *disciple of the wise* is estranged from this *Exilarch*[30] and detests him. Therefore I had to justify myself. I explained that I had recommended him on the testimony of my disciple, [31] in whose religious observance[32] and knowledge I have complete confidence, and on the testimony of an elder from his city, namely, Abū al-Riḍā ibn Ṭībūn, whom I had asked about the religious observance[32] and conduct [of the candidate]. They praised him highly, and I thereupon recommended him. In the letter which I wrote to him [Samuel ben Ali], I included only this matter and the advice to put an end to the *controversy* and to be like a father to you. Indeed, your rank is not his, nor is his rank yours.

[13] <Because they told me that my son had reviled him, called him "a foolish old man" and spoken harshly about him, I wrote in the course of that letter: "Those who say such things are gossipmongers; he would not think it permissible to do something like that. In his letter, which is in my hands, he praises you and says that there is no one like you in Iraq." In this vein I wrote to him.> I was on my guard about everything [that I was about to do because of what][33] my son had advised. You know of my humility with everyone and that I put myself on the same level as the most insignificant person. However, I deviated from my moral habits in that letter because of your advice.

[14] What I wish from my esteemed, dear son—in accordance with your duty to God and to me—is that you not grind this man[34] into the ground. *If no wisdom is here, there is old age here.*[35] It is not acceptable for a young man to attack *an old man who is the head of a judicial academy.*[36] May God restrain you from humiliating someone who is great in the sight of the people. But more than that, I beseech you to treat as great anyone who is insignificant in the sight of the people.

[15] Do not let his speaking harshly about you in the letter publicized in *Israel* continue to distress you. Is anyone struck without crying out? Don't you know that you have greatly harmed him, threatened his splendor, and punctured his dignity?[37] Indeed, were it not for you, the *Exilarch* would have been in his hands like a pullet in the claws of a hawk. Moreover, he would have denounced him about the matter of the bill of divorce and other things and would have torn him apart. So do not expect that someone you have harmed will love you and thank you. Nor is there any need for you to say, "But where is religion?" No, because for this man and those like him among even greater men of former times, religion is nothing more than a way to avoid major sins, which is how the common people view it. They do not believe the duties of ethics[38] to be part of religion, nor are they as careful about what they say as men of perfect piety are. Now, most of these [aforementioned] religious men were in positions of [political] authority, and when religion is joined to [political] authority, piety disappears. Everyone cannot be expected to be *like Ḥanina ben Dosa and Pinḥas ben Yair*,[39] may peace be upon them. Nor should anyone not at that level be called irreligious.

[16] In sum, if you are indeed my disciple, I want you to train yourself to follow my moral habits. The most noble conduct for you is to be reviled without reviling in turn and without letting your words get away from you. Above all, show the fear of God in your words, and let the criticism of intelligent and religious men be last of all. Make your goal with this man never to attack him about anything—if you are unable to achieve a reconciliation with him. A man is able to reply, criticize, and oppose [others] in a refined and friendly way. Do not depart from my advice in any respect.

[17] I have already written the letter you asked me to write to the *Exilarch*. His letter has reached me, and I have had it read aloud in my house while standing up. Everybody in Fustat,[40] *from young to old*, was in the house, for there was a *circumcision* and it was *Sukkoth*. They all stood up when I did, and it was a great day for him.[41] *R. Samuel, the teacher*, read it. All the elders of the community were on the dais, from right to left. Is there anything more you can ask of me?

I wrote to the head of the judicial academy that if I had

known about the *controversy* and dispute there, I would not have stepped in among them. However, I had already acted, *and the horn had already been heard in Yavneh.*[42] I explained that to him and informed him that it was impossible to turn things back. My esteemed son should let the head of the judicial academy know what I have done. You should know that I will not reply to him until I receive a letter from my son clarifying these matters I am speaking about—after you have thoroughly investigated them.

[18] As for the treatise,[43] I am amazed at my son. Why did he send it to me—so that I would thereby learn of the paucity of his [Samuel ben Ali's] knowledge? What, do you suppose that I consider him or someone greater than he to know anything? As far as I am concerned, his limits are those of every preacher: he stumbles around the way others stumble around. God knows, I have been amazed at how he would know enough to say these foolish things, ridiculous and disgraceful as they are. But the fluency of the miserable man! If he were content[44] to give a proof taken from *the hundred blessings and the blessing by whoever sees the graves of Israel,*[45] that would be more appropriate for him than to discuss the soul and the opinions of the philosophers. However, because he equates himself with someone greater than he is, he raves even more than this. He has undoubtedly transmitted the raving of someone else.[46]

[19] A letter from Yemen similar to what was mentioned has reached me, and I answered them. However, those people confused *the world-to-come* with *the days of the messiah,* in spite of the explanation we gave in *Pereq Ḥeleq.*[47] There we were very explicit and gave a complete enumeration of those *who have no portion in the world-to-come,* among whom is *the one who denies the resurrection of the dead.*[48] How could anyone with a sound intellect imagine that this is a principle[49] that someone who believes in the *religion of Israel* would not believe in, especially since it is well known and obvious? It is astonishing that those who asked the question,[50] the one who responded,[51] and even you say we ought not to interpret the verses of the *Bible* referring to the *resurrection of the dead.* Who should interpret that? Who should undertake this? In sum, I shall compose a treatise about that, and it will reach you shortly in my own handwriting.

[20] I have already sent you six fascicles of the *Guide*[52] which I took back from someone else. They complete the first part. I am uncertain whether I sent you the introduction I had joined to them. Therefore I am sending it to you now. None other than the *pious judge,* Abū al-Muḥāsan, copied them. Guard them very closely and do not lose them so that I am not harmed by *the Gentiles and the many wicked men of Israel.*

[21] As for what you mentioned about going to Baghdad, I have already given you permission to open *a house of study* and to teach and give legal opinions, while you persevere in defending the *compilation.*[53] However, I am afraid that you will be continually plagued by evils from them,[54] so that in the end only evil will be the result. Also, if you are completely attached to teaching, your business will suffer. I do not advise taking money from them. So far as I am concerned, one dirhem as a wage for tailoring, carpentry, or weaving is preferable to the *income of the Exilarch.*[55] If you work with them, you will be financially ruined; if you take money from them, you will be viewed with contempt. In my opinion, you should apply your labors to business and the study of medicine, along with occupying yourself with the *study of* the true *Torah.* Teach only the *laws* of the *Master,*[56] *may his memory be blessed,* and compare them with the *compilation.*[57] If you[58] find a contradiction, you will know that reflection on the *Talmud* leads to that; so search for the passages. If you spend your time on the *commentaries,* the *explanations* of the intricate problems of the *Gemara,*[59] and those matters from which we have been relieved, time will be wasted and the benefit will diminish. Whatever you decide, let me know. May God guide you along the best paths.

[22] I tell you I have already acquired a very great reputation in medicine among the distinguished men—such as the Supreme Judge, the Princes, the court of al-Fāḍil,[60] and other leaders of the country—from whom one obtains nothing.[61] As for the common people, I have been elevated above them and they have no access to me, due to my continually spending my days in Cairo[62] visiting the sick.[63] When I get to Fustat, my goal during the rest of the day and night is to be able to peruse the medical books for what I need. You know how extensive and difficult this art is for someone religious and precise, who does not want to say anything unless he knows the proof for it,

where it is mentioned, and the reasoning behind it. This is why I do not find a single hour to study anything pertaining to the Law and I study only on the Sabbath. Nor do we find time to study anything of the other sciences. I have suffered a great deal on this account. Recently I received everything that Averroes composed on the books of Aristotle, except *On Sensation and the Sensible.* I think that he is extraordinarily correct, but I have not yet found time to go over all of his books.

[23] Do not deprive me of your letters, for I have no more intimate companion than they. When Ibn al-Mashāṭ arrives from India,[64] give him an account of what I have told you. All of our friends send you greetings. Abū al-Ma'ālī[65] the elder, his brother and our son Abū al-Riḍā,[66] and everyone in my household—the free men and the servants—rejoice in hearing good news about you, God knows. With one voice they pray for a reunion with you, in accord with their wish and yours. Give my best greetings to your father-in-law, *R. Josiah,* the venerable old man, the pious, faithful, and trustworthy *judge, the glory of our holy, eminent scholars, the diligent student, the splendor of the priests and their strength, may his Rock and Redeemer guard him.* Also, convey my best greetings to his son, may God increase his delight in him. *May he see offspring; may his days be long.*[67] In spite of the express legal prohibition, *never ask about the peace [or welfare] of a woman,*[68] a prayer is not forbidden. *May you be at peace and may your home be at peace.*[69] *At the appointed time, may Sarah have a son.*[70] *May your peace increase and be great, in accord with your wish and the wish of the writer,*

Moses son of R. Maimon.

At the beginning of the month of *Marḥeshvon, 1191.*[71]

NOTES

1. Maimonides refers affectionately to Joseph ben Judah in the letter as his son (or as "the son" in the Arabic text, translated as "my son"). According to Jewish tradition, a student is like the teacher's son; the teacher needs "to watch over his students and love them, for they are the sons who give pleasure in this world and for the world-to-come" (*M.T.*, Laws of the Study of Torah, V 12; cf. I 2).
2. We have omitted the command "know that," which precedes the pronoun "I." In the next sentence, we have omitted "he said," which precedes "in addition," and also the words, "he said to him," at the beginning of the next paragraph. We thus agree with Baneth's interpretation that the omitted words were not part of the original text.
3. Reading *ilā mā* (ed. Simonson), instead of *lī mā*.
4. The *Mishneh Torah*.
5. I Kings 19:10. The original verse reads: "I have been very zealous for the Lord, God of hosts."
6. Literally: root.
7. Literally: roots of beliefs.
8. Joel 3:5.
9. According to the Introduction to the *Mishneh Torah*, there is no need to study any other work on the Oral Law besides the *Mishneh Torah* (ed. Hyamson, p. 4b).
10. Reading *yaṭra'*, instead of *yaṭrā*.
11. Eccles. 2:23.
12. Deut. 28:29.
13. The reference is to Samuel ben Ali, the head of the Baghdad judiciary. The abrupt change from the subject of the preceding paragraph could be explained as due either to a faulty transmission of the original text or to the transcribing of several letters on a single manuscript.
14. *Yeshivah*, which refers to an assembly whose purpose is to render legal decisions. At that time it did not have the later meaning of a center for the study of the *Talmud*.
15. Reading *ya'tarif*, instead of *yata'arraf*.
16. *B.T.*, Horayot, 14a.
17. Literally: religion. The Arabic word is *dīn*, which refers to beliefs as well as practices.
18. More literally: I do not defend my soul, because my soul's nobility and my character lead me to ignore fools, not to triumph over them with my tongue.
19. *B.T.*, Berakhot, 19a.
20. The *Mishneh Torah*.
21. Samuel ben Ali and Zechariah.

22. Samuel ben Ali's son-in-law, who was a high official (*Av Bet Din*) at Samuel's law court in Baghdad.
23. The study of the *Talmud* and its commentaries.
24. Cf. *B.T.*, Sukkah, 28a, where the "small thing," the *Talmud*, is contrasted with a "great thing," the Account of the Chariot, which Maimonides identifies as divine science or metaphysics (*M.T.*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, IV 13; *Guide*, Introduction [3b]).
25. Or: whose memory is dear to us.
26. Literally: my nature. The word translated as "composition" (*waḍ'*) also connotes "convention," so that the sentence alludes both to what is by convention and what is by nature.
27. Zechariah had originally come from Aleppo to Baghdad in order to study with Samuel ben Ali. The latter's opponents attempted to enlist his support, for Zechariah was already a recognized scholar, but he joined Samuel's judiciary and after a while was appointed to the position of *Av Bet Din*. See S. Assaf, "Qovetz shel Iggrot R. Shmuel ben Ali Uvnei Doro," *Tarbiz*, I, 1, (Oct. 1929), pp. 107–108; I, 2 (Jan. 1930), p. 61.
28. The region encompassing northwestern Africa and Moorish Spain.
29. *Mishnah*, Demai, IV 6.
30. Samuel of Mosul.
31. Presumably Joseph ben Judah.
32. Literally: religion. See note seventeen.
33. The brackets contain the reading of Baneth, who reconstructed the text on the basis of a medieval Hebrew translation.
34. Reading *al-rajul*, instead of *al-rajūl*.
35. Cf. *B.T.*, Berakhot, 39a, which reads: "If no wisdom is here, is not old age here?"
36. *B.T.*, Yoma, 28b.
37. Literally: destroyed his arrows.
38. Or: moral habits.
39. Two talmudic sages renowned for their piety.
40. Literally: "Old Cairo" (*Maṣr*) from *Maṣr al-Fusṭāṭ*, which was on the outskirts of the Fatimid capitol, Cairo. Even though Fustat had been more populous and prosperous than Cairo at one point, by the time of Maimonides its decline had begun.
41. On this occasion, the Exilarch was publicly endorsed by Maimonides as well as by the important Jewish community of Fustat. Maimonides strongly supported the office of the Exilarchate, regarding the Exilarchs as being in the stead of kings. *M.T.*, Laws Concerning the Sanhedrin, IV 13–14; *C.M.*, Bekhorot, IV 4.
42. *B.T.*, Rosh Hashanah, 29b.
43. The treatise of Samuel ben Ali in which he replied to a question from Yemen concerning the resurrection of the dead, and attacked the position of Maimonides on this subject. Maimonides'

own *Treatise on the Resurrection of the Dead* was in response to this attack.

44. Following Baneth's suggestion and reading *iqtaṣar*, instead of *istaqar*.
45. Among the one hundred blessings that a Jew is required to recite each day, two refer to the resurrection of the dead. There is a separate blessing to be recited when the graves of Jews are seen, and this blessing concludes with a reference to the resurrection of the dead (*B.T.*, Berakhot, 58b).
46. The reference is apparently to Saadia, who seems to have influenced the view of Samuel ben Ali concerning the resurrection of the dead.
47. The world-to-come is achieved through the permanent preservation of the intellect and hence can be attained at any time. See the selection from *Pereq Ḥeleq* translated below.
48. Among the thirteen principles ("foundations") enumerated in *Pereq Ḥeleq* is the affirmation of the resurrection of the dead.
49. Literally: foundation.
50. The Yemenites.
51. Samuel ben Ali. See note forty-three.
52. Although this word is in Arabic, it is in italics here because it refers to the title of a book.
53. The *Mishneh Torah.*
54. Samuel ben Ali and his companions.
55. The communities under the jurisdiction of the Exilarch were obliged to pay taxes to him.
56. Alfasi (1013–1103), who was the author of an important code of Jewish law.
57. The *Mishneh Torah.*
58. The second person plural is used throughout this sentence to refer to Joseph and his students. The next sentence has the second person singular.
59. The *Gemara* is the main part of the *Talmud* and contains lengthy discussions of the laws set forth in the *Mishnah.*
60. The vizier of Saladin.
61. No fees were collected from such distinguished men, but presumably they gave Maimonides gifts for services rendered.
62. The caliphs and the military aristocracy lived in Cairo.
63. In a letter to Samuel ibn Tibbon, Maimonides gives a rather different account of his medical practice in Fustat. He says that when he returns from Cairo to Fustat in the afternoon, he finds his antechambers filled with patients, whom he attends until nightfall, and then collapses from exhaustion. Maimonides tells this to Ibn Tibbon in order to dissuade him from making a visit to Egypt. *Qovetz Teshuvot ha-Rambam*, ed. A. Lichtenberg (Leipzig: 1849), II 28a.

64. The words "and our friends" follow, but do not appear to be part of the original text. Cf. Baneth's note *ad loc.*
65. Maimonides' brother-in-law, who achieved renown as a scribe and secretary to Saladin's wife, the mother of al-Afḍal.
66. The son of Abū al-Ma'ālī. Maimonides refers to him affectionately as "our son."
67. Isa. 53:10.
68. *B.T.*, Kiddushin, 70b.
69. I Sam. 25:6. The rabbis refer to a man's wife as his "home."
70. Gen. 18:14.
71. This is apparently a scribal error and should read 1190. The *Treatise on the Resurrection of the Dead* was written in 1190 and, according to the letter (#19), it had not yet been written. See Baneth, p. 33.